Church Criticizes CIA Pace Of Sending Data to Hill Unit

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The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Operations accused the Central Intelligence Agency yesterday of dragging its feet in response to initial requests from investigators.

Although the CIA has promised full cooperation with the Senate inquiry into its operations, Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), the committee chairman, criticized "the slow pace" that the committee has encountered in seeking various documents from the administration.

Speaking with reporters after a closed meeting of the committee, Church said its members had decided to prod both the CIA and the White House for a speedup. He warned that the inquiry would be kept alive "until we get all that is needed."

Sen. John G. Tower (R-Tex.), the committee vice chairman, also voiced his dissatisfaction, but said he thought the problem was "institutional" rather than deliberate.

Church said he saw no excuse for the delay. He suggested that an excessive number of clearances are being required before any documents can be released.

The result, Church said, has been to slow the committee staff interrogation of witnesses and gathering of its own evidence. He said the staff was ordered yesterday "to proceed full tilt with its own independent investigative work" instead of waiting any longer.

Tower added that both he and Church will seek a meeting as soon as possible with top White House aides in an effort to secure a steadier flow of information.

The White House has supplied the committee with several hundred top-secret documents and National Security Council directives concerning the work of the CIA and other government intelligence agencies, but only after approximately a month's delay.

The committee submitted a separate request to the CIA on March 12. It asked for a wide range of records, from CIA internal studies to documents involving specific covert operations and allegedly illegal spying.

"We have not received much of anything from the CIA," Church said. "That's one bottleneck we hope to break."

The committee, however, set no deadlines and does not appear at this point to be contemplating subpoenas for any records that might be held back.

Church said he still hopes to launch public hearings early this summer and complete them by fall.

He emphasized that the committee does not intend to let the pace of the investigation "be set by the executive agencies,' but indicated that the inquiry will be continued into 1976 unless the administration helps to hurry it along.